

civilized condition, and thus in a position of juridical equality. While the rest of this volume responds to an important debate within Kant scholarship, Flikschuh and Ajei's chapter makes a case for the importance of reconsidering Kant's criticism of colonialism from within global discourses about coloniality.

Jordan Pascoe

Manhattan College

email: jordan.pascoe@manhattan.edu

Patrick R. Frierson, *Kant's Empirical Psychology*

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Patrick Frierson's new book, *Kant's Empirical Psychology*, challenges us to think seriously about Kant's philosophy of action from the empirical point of view. In some ways, this is not a particularly distinctive thing to do. As Frierson himself notes, the interest in making a distinction between 'practical' and 'empirical' (or 'scientific') ways of thinking about Kant's ideas goes back at least as far as H. J. Paton and continues with contemporary Kant interpreters' ideas, including those of thinkers like Christine Korsgaard and Onora O'Neill (p. 121). Indeed, almost every Kant interpreter agrees that we must think of Kant's philosophy as involving a distinction either between two worlds or two points of view. To say then, as Frierson does, that we must distinguish between a practical, transcendental 'from within' perspective on morality on the one hand and an empirical psychological perspective on human action on the other does not seem a new claim.

It is the way in which Frierson so whole-heartedly asks us to consider this alternative 'empirical' perspective that makes his work unique. Most recent scholars (Korsgaard distinctive amongst them) who distinguish between the practical and the empirical/scientific point of view do so to turn to questions of how to understand ourselves as free agents from the practical point of view. It is not that Frierson is uninterested in this question, but his main concern is to think about how the psychological aspects of Kant's ethics can be made sense of from an empirical psychological point of view. As he puts it, we can justify

(at least) two perspectives on human action, an empirical-psychological perspective, from which one investigates human

actions just like any other event in nature, and a free-practical perspective, from which one deliberates about what to do ‘under the idea of freedom,’ taking one’s action as up to oneself. ... Within empirical psychology, Kant can and should employ a strictly determinist account of human actions, seeking to reduce the widest variety of given mental phenomena to the smallest set of the simplest causal laws. Within moral philosophy (and practical deliberation), however, he can and should appeal to a transcendental freedom that is not bound by any empirical determinants, a freedom that determines but is not in turn determined by our empirically available psychological conditions. (p. 16)

What emerges from this study is a careful consideration of human action from Kant’s empirical psychological point of view. Frierson is successful in telling this story largely because he is first of all willing to spend time interpreting parts of Kant’s works infrequently studied; and second, because the fruits of this careful investigation of texts yield a robust sense of the empirical point of view which he can then bring to more familiar Kantian texts, giving them a new, empirical twist that has not previously been fully realized. As Frierson describes his project, ‘[e]mpirical psychology emerges from the systematic employment of the theoretical standpoint on human action’ (p. 145).

What results is not, of course, exactly the point of view of contemporary science, though Kant’s empirical psychology does have similarities to that science. The self under consideration is ‘the self *as an empirical object*, the I as it appears to itself, not as it is in itself’, that is, ‘the self of which one is aware in inner sense’ (p. 49). And although Frierson admits some import to the introspection one can have of one’s own self in this sense, it is crucial for him that empirical psychology also allows this self-perception to be corrected by third-personal observational research into the inner selves of others. It is in this latter respect that Kant’s empirical psychology most resembles contemporary psychology. The most basic grounds of empirical mental states to be discovered will be ‘natural pre-dispositions’ which will themselves be taken as irreducible to anything further. The ultimate goal of this study is to reduce ‘the wide diversity of operations of the soul into as few basic powers as possible’ (p. 50).

The heart of Frierson’s account of empirical psychology is laid out in chapters 2 and 3 where he provides a detailed account of how human action emerges from a combination of cognitions, feelings and desires, all undergirded by natural predispositions which are developed into character traits. Chapters 4 and 5 consider complications in understanding this empirical account of action when we admit that moral actions, including

those connected in some way with the *a priori* moral feeling of respect, must also be fitted into this account. Chapters 6 and 7 then consider aberrations from the normal psychological account of things provided in chapters 2 and 3.

For the sake of this short review, I must set aside many interesting issues: the details of the relationship of pre-disposition, character, cognition, instinct, feeling and desire in making sense of the production of action; and second, interesting questions that arise in seeking to make sense of the divergence of the human mind from its normal operations. My focus for the rest of this discussion will be on the question of whether Frierson is successful in convincing his reader that we can indeed make sense of specifically moral action from the perspective of empirical psychology.

Frierson himself realizes that the integration of moral action into his empirical account of action is one of the biggest challenges to his hope of defending Kant's empirical psychology:

[I]t is in the context of moral motivation in particular that many are skeptical of the possibility of a thoroughly empirical account of human action ... since Kant explicitly refers to the 'origin' of 'duty' as 'nothing less than what elevates a human being above himself (as a part of the sensible world) ... that is, freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature' (5: 86–7). (p. 116)

Despite the *prima facie* appearance that explaining moral action, and especially moral motivation, from an empirical point of view would violate this strong claim that dutiful action frees an agent 'from the mechanism of the whole of nature', Frierson insists that moral action and motivation can indeed be described empirically. To understand how he takes on this challenge, it is helpful first to dwell on his acknowledged debt to H. J. Paton and the precise way in which Paton distinguishes between empirical and practical accounts of action:

First of all we can take an external and scientific view of action ... We apprehend something, whether it be a binding moral law or a glass of wine. This gives rise to a feeling, which in turn gives rise to an impulse, which in turn (in co-operation with reason) gives rise to an action ... The whole process is explained as a chain of causes and effects. (p. 121, quoting Paton)

This scientific perspective on action is distinguished by Paton from another 'very different ... point of view of the agent acting, a point of view

which sees the action from within, not from without'. It is from this point of view that we see action as 'something other than a causal event', and instead as 'the direct product of our free will' (ibid.). Paton comes to the interesting conclusion that 'from an external or psychological point of view our motive is the feeling of [respect], whereas from the internal or practical point of view our motive is simply the moral law ... without the intervention of any kind of feeling' (ibid.). So, whereas on an empirical account of action we can tell a story of the causes of actions via investigation of cognitions, feelings and impulses in cooperation with reason, on the practical account of action we understand reasons for action, not causes of action. As such, we set aside the empirical story of influence by feelings and impulses, and focus instead upon ourselves as free agents with reasons that both justify and motivate our actions.

Frierson takes this account of scientific and practical views on action provided by Paton as his model for chapters 4 and 5. In these chapters, he applies his notion of an empirical account of action from chapters 2 and 3 (which brings in both cognition and feeling in the production of action) specifically to moral action, where the important feeling involved is the moral feeling of respect. Although I have a few quibbles with some details of the order of feeling and cognition here (and especially his claim that 'only an actively cognized principle can cause the practical pleasures that issue forth in action', p. 132), the details of this account, were they to be asserted from a practical point of view, are ideas with which I have a general sympathy. Indeed, Frierson's subtle discussions of the development of one's moral disposition via 'active attention to the moral law' (p. 135), and his focus on the importance of cultivation of one's innate predispositions via education and moral catechism, are particularly insightful. But of course, for Frierson, all this is being assessed from the empirical psychological point of view, not the practical, from-within point of view. So our attentiveness is influenced by 'several empirical influences [which] ... giv[e] one a clearer, more explicit, more frequently attended to cognition of the moral law' (p. 132). And both moral '[c]atechism and example' are explicitly empirical influences upon us which 'promote pure cognition of the moral law and the motivational efficacy that such cognition brings given our natural predispositions' (p. 139).

Frierson's insistence that all of these reflections on moral development are best understood from the point of view of empirical psychology has, however, an unfortunate (and perhaps unintended?) consequence: this elevating of the empirical point of view leads to an unexpectedly emaciated notion of the practical point of view, the latter of which characterizes the practical deliberation of finite beings in a way more akin to divine, unlimited rational beings than to finite rational beings. Let us explore how this results for Frierson.

First, as we have already seen, Frierson insistently asserts, with Paton, that the practical point of view is the space of reasons. This is the point of view from which we can deliberate about and evaluate our actions, and also understand our actions as following freely from the reasons which emerge in our deliberation. All of this makes sense and is, in many ways, simply a rehearsing of what Korsgaard would claim about the practical point of view. Yet Frierson makes a further unexpected move when he expands upon this realm of the practical. Having just articulated Kant's distinction between 'the principle of appraisal of obligation' and 'the principle of its performance or execution' (i.e. the distinction between justifying that something is a duty and being motivated to act in accordance with that duty), he asserts the following:

Of these questions, the first [about 'appraisal' or justification of obligation] cannot be a[n empirical] psychological question at all. Empirical psychology is purely descriptive and explanatory; it offers no basis for moral judgment ... At the same time, the second question [about 'execution' or motivation] barely makes sense from the practical point of view. ... One who has reasoned that the best course of action is such-and-such has no further question to ask about why to do such-and-such, which is the only motivational question within the practical perspective. The distinction between subjective and objective motives ... cannot be made from within the practical point of view ... The principle of judgment applies to the from-within, practical reasons on the basis of which one freely chooses to act. The principle of motive asks about the motives observed from without, the empirical causes of conformity to the moral law as an object of empirical psychology. (pp. 146–7)

This passage clarifies the extent to which Frierson insists that the from-within, practical perspective is the space of reasons. It is from this perspective that one justifies one's actions as obligatory. And, for Frierson, this question of justification of obligation essentially collapses into the 'objective' question of motivation: once I know good reasons for action, I both justify that action and am objectively motivated to do it. But as he notes, the further 'subjective' question of motivation (i.e. the question of whether I will act as I know reason demands) 'barely makes sense from the practical point of view', since one who knows the best reasons for action has 'no further question to ask about why to do' something. The whole question of the subjective motivation to action – the question of what actually leads me to do the thing that I know is right – is thus relegated to the realm of the empirical, not the practical.

This is a huge claim to make. Kant scholars have spent years trying to make sense of Kant's moral feeling of respect as the subjective motivational source of moral action, but Frierson is saying that it does not even really make best sense to think of the moral feeling of respect from the practical point of view. He is, I think, supported in this by Paton's very precise way of distinguishing the practical from the scientific. Recall that, according to Paton, it is from the third-personal scientific point of view that we can make sense of feelings as causes of actions, but that the practical, from-within point of view involves no appeal at all to feeling. Following this distinction, Frierson draws the obvious conclusion: any motivational state involving feeling cannot be pursued from within, only empirically. As a result, assessment of subjective motivation to action is an empirical, not a practical, question.

I find numerous problems with this account of things. It is, first, odd to say one is not entitled to explore issues of subjective motivation from the practical point of view. So much of Kant's self-identified 'practical' philosophy is devoted to making sense of just this issue; and, despite Frierson's impressive consideration of less frequently read texts which give convincing status to the realm of the empirical, this relegation of subjective motivation from the practical to the empirical seems excessive. This is especially the case once we recall that Frierson's discipline of empirical psychology emerges from 'systematic employment of the *theoretical* standpoint on human action' (p. 145, emphasis added). Is there really no specifically *practical* point of view from which to consider the question of subjective motivation to action?

The reason Frierson cannot find a space for subjective motivation in the from-within, practical perspective is that he has not seriously considered the possibility that both reasons *and feelings* could have a from-within aspect. For Frierson, following Paton, feeling is only something to be investigated empirically, as a psychologist would. One does, briefly, consider introspection of one's own inner sense to start the study of empirical psychology; but this initial access to one's inner self needs to be corrected (and sometimes abandoned) by appeal to more objective third-personal assessment of the same. But so much of Kant's practical philosophy encourages us to encounter our feelings first-personally, from the perspective of ourselves as agents, and to learn something practically from that very first-personal introspection. Frierson himself relies on passages which strongly encourage us to understand Kant as presenting the first-personal perspective of a moral agent; yet he uses these passages to argue for a third-personal, empirical understanding of that agent. Consider for example a passage (upon which Frierson relies) in which Kant is speaking of the moral education of a young person: '[M]y young listener will be raised step by step from mere approval to admiration, from that to amazement, and finally to the greatest veneration

and a lively wish that he himself could be such a man' (5: 156, quoted at p. 139). It is true that Kant's conclusion here about this cultivation of morality is that 'morality must have more power over the human heart the more purely it is presented'; yet his further point is that what needs to occur from within the developing moral agent is a raising of his first-personally experienced emotions (of 'approval', 'admiration', 'amazement' and 'veneration') so as to allow the practical perspective of this agent to recognize the moral law for what it truly is. There is, in other words, much room within the practical, from-within perspective to welcome both the role of feeling and the development of subjective motivation to action. Yet there is no space within Frierson's cutting of the practical/empirical pie to consider seriously that first-personal felt experience has a place in Kant's practical, deliberative point of view.

It must be noted that Frierson occasionally suggests that one could practically, and not just empirically, understand many of the central passages relating to the moral feeling of respect. For example, when he is preparing to discuss three central passages about the moral feeling of respect, he notes that 'one can read all these passages practically, in terms of the grounds of choice from within deliberation rather than psychological descriptions from without' (p. 152). I certainly do not disagree that these passages can (and should) be read from the practical point of view. But it seems that Frierson has backed himself into a corner here: because of his definition of the practical taken from Paton, in which the practical is a space for reasons and not feeling, he does not seem entitled to speak of feeling from a practical point of view. The only access we have to feeling (including, presumably, the moral feeling of respect) is via empirical analysis.

A further problem with Frierson's relegation of subjective motivation to the empirical realm has to do with what results for our understanding of the from-within, practical space of reasons. His claim that the deliberating and evaluating practical agent would have 'no further questions' beyond the question of whether reason justifies an action as obligatory leaves us with a particularly emaciated version of the deliberative process for finite rational beings. The crucial thing to remember about such beings is that we (unlike divine, unlimited beings) seek to *corrupt* our space of reasons. Further, that corruption does not come from something outside reason itself (like inclinations and instincts, empirically and scientifically construed), but from within reason itself. This is Kant's point in the *Religion* when he asserts that 'the ground of [radical] evil cannot ... be placed, as is commonly done, in the sensuous nature of the human being and in the natural inclinations originating from it' (6: 34–5). As I have argued elsewhere, the enemy of virtue is within the walls of the City of Reason itself, and finds its footing via self-deception about the force of reasons. As such, we do not need to exit the space of reasons in order to find the corruption of reason. If so, then contra

Frierson we *can* discover a meaningful concern for subjective motivation from within the perspective of the practical. From within the deliberative, practical perspective, we seek to deceive ourselves about the true strength of those reasons which present themselves as categorical. And when we do so, the question of subjective motivation to moral actions is indeed a live question for the deliberating agent.

One could even say on Frierson's reading of the practical that finite rational agents cannot make sense of their obligations specifically as imperatives. Recall that, for Kant, recognizing a moral demand as an imperative involves the underlying assumption that we do not necessarily want to do what we know we have the best reason to do:

All imperatives are expressed by an *ought* and indicate by this the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that by its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it (a necessitation). They say that to do or to omit something would be good, but they say it to a will that does not always do something just because it is represented to it that it would be good to do that thing. (4: 413, quoted at pp. 24–5)

To recognize something as an imperative from the practical point of view, it is necessary to understand that I may or may not end up choosing the truly compelling reason. In the space of reasons, I will therefore argue with myself about how and whether I take a categorical imperative as truly categorical. Or, in other words, the recognition of something as an imperative requires that we have an awareness of our subjective motivational state. But when Frierson claims that '[t]he distinction between subjective and objective motives ... cannot be made from within the practical point of view' (p. 147), it seems that we would need to relegate the question of how we recognize a reason specifically as an imperative to the empirical, not the practical, realm. Perhaps a scientist assessing my motives or state of mind could determine that the conflicted state that generates an imperative is present. But it seems that I, first-personally, am at best unlikely to do so.

Despite the concerns that I have for how Frierson draws the contours of the practical in light of his privileging of the empirical, I do recommend reading this book. Although his elevating of the realm of the empirical creates problems for saving the realm of the practical, his consideration of this realm of empirical psychology is accomplished intelligently and with a refreshing new perspective on much-read and much-interpreted texts.

Jeanine M. Grenberg

St Olaf College

email: grenberg@stolaf.edu